

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, US, KS
SUBJ: SOUTH KOREAN ATTITUDES - A POSSIBLE SEA CHANGE

SUMMARY: KOREAN MOOD AT HIGH-LEVEL DINNER FOR SENATOR JAVITS
VERY POSITIVE. ON TONGSUN PARK, REALIZATION OF NEED TO
RESOLVE ISSUE. HUMAN RIGHTS AREA ALSO VIEWED AS REQUIRING
EARLY ATTENTION. END SUMMARY.

1. AT AMBASSADOR'S DINNER FOR SENATOR JAVITS EVENING
DECEMBER 1, ATTENDED BY, AMONG OTHERS, SPEAKER, OPPOSITION
LEADER, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SENIOR BLUE HOUSE
OFFICIAL, TONE AND MOOD OF VARIOUS DISCUSSIONS WAS VERY
POSITIVE. IN CONTRAST TO RECENT DAYS WHERE CONCERN AND
HESITATION WAS MOST COMMON THEME, FOCUS NOW APPEARS TO
BE ON SOLUTIONS. CENTRAL GOAL CLEARLY SEEN AS MAINTAINING
FIRM US-ROK ALLIANCE AND IMPROVING KOREAN IMAGE IN EYES
OF US PUBLIC AND CONGRESS.

2. IN DISCUSSION WITH SPEAKER AND SENIOR BLUE HOUSE
OFFICIAL, AMBASSADOR WAS ASSURED THAT PRESIDENT
PERSONALLY WANTS TONGSUN PARK CASE RESOLVED. THIS
DECISION RESULT OF APPROACHES MADE TO HIM BY VARIOUS
SENIOR MEMBERS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. MAIN AREAS OF
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CONCERN REMAINING ARE POSSIBLE FURTHER ACTIONS BY
HOUSE ETHICS COMMITTEE AND DIRECTION OF SHIFT IN
US PUBLIC OPINION. PRESIDENT APPARENTLY CONVINCED
TO ADOPT PRESENT COURSE OF ACTION ON BASIS OF
ASSURANCES THAT THIS WAS ONLY WAY IN WHICH CURRENT
NEGATIVE IMAGE OF KOREA IN THE US COULD BE CORRECTED.
POLICY LEADERS NOW ASKING ASSURANCES FROM US THAT

THIS ASSESSMENT IS CORRECT. FURTHER EVIDENCE OF GOVERNMENT INTENTION TO RESOLVE THIS MATTER WAS CALL EARLIER IN THE DAY TO AMBASSADOR BY THE PRIME MINISTER. AFTER EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, PRIME MINISTER STATED HIS CALL WAS TO ASSURE THE AMBASSADOR THAT ALL WAS TO ASSURE THE AMBASSADOR THAT ALL CONCERNED WANTED TONGSUN PARK CASE RESOLVED. TO QUOTE THE PRIME MINISTER, "THE SOONER THE BETTER". THIS WAS SOLE PURPOSE OF UNSCHEDULED COMMUNICATION.

3. IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS AREA THERE SEEMS A GENERAL CONSENSUS THAT POLITICAL PRISONERS, INCLUDING KIM TAE CHUNG, SHOULD BE RELEASED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND GOVERNMENT APPEARS SINCERE IN ITS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THIS END. IN DISCUSSION WITH OPPOSITION LEADER, BOTH AMBASSADOR AND SPEAKER URGED THAT HE NOW TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE TO CAPITALIZE ON THE EXPRESSION OF CONCERN FOR PRISONERS ACHIEVED IN LAST ASSEMBLY SESSION.

4. IN ADDITIONAL AREA THAT HAS CONCERNED MANY AMERICAN HERE, WE WERE INFORMED THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DOES NOT PLAN TO TAKE ACTION ON PROPOSED FOREIGNER REGISTRATION LEGISLATION DURING THIS SESSION. TACTIC BEING USED TO AVOID ACTION IS THAT LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL, WHILE APPROVED BY THE CABINET, DOES NOT
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HAVE PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL AND THEREFORE SHOULD BE HELD PENDING HIS CONSIDERATION.

5. COMMENT: WHILE INITIATIVES DISCUSSED REQUIRE COOPERATION OF OTHERS TO BE ACHIEVED, IT IS CLEAR THAT GOVERNMENT AND OPINION LEADERS WISH TO MOVE ON AREAS OF CONCERN TO US. AT THIS POINT, ONE ALMOST HAS THE FEELING THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO CLOSE ACCOUNTS BEFORE THE NEW YEAR AND BEGIN FRESH IN 1978. SOLUTION OF TONGSUN PARK IMPASSE AND POSITIVE MOVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS AREA, COUPLED WITH WIDELY RUMORED CABINET SHIFTS IN MID-DECEMBER WOULD, WE BELIEVE, BE VIEWED HERE AS ACHIEVING THAT POSTURE FOR THE NEW YEAR.
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